



PCT/GB 2004/00149



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

PRIORITY DOCUMENT

SUBMITTED OR TRANSMITTED IN
COMPLIANCE WITH RULE 17.1(a) OR (b)

The Patent Office

Concept House

Cardiff Road

Newport

South Wales

NP10 8QQ

REC'D 07 JUN 2004

WIPO PCT

I, the undersigned, being an officer duly authorised in accordance with Section 74(1) and (4) of the Deregulation & Contracting Out Act 1994, to sign and issue certificates on behalf of the Comptroller-General, hereby certify that annexed hereto is a true copy of the documents as originally filed in connection with the patent application identified therein.

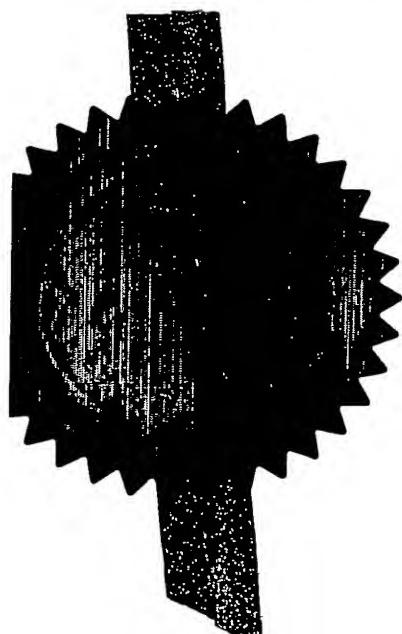
In accordance with the Patents (Companies Re-registration) Rules 1982, if a company named in this certificate and any accompanying documents has re-registered under the Companies Act 1980 with the same name as that with which it was registered immediately before re-registration save for the substitution as, or inclusion as, the last part of the name of the words "public limited company" or their equivalents in Welsh, references to the name of the company in this certificate and any accompanying documents shall be treated as references to the name with which it is so re-registered.

In accordance with the rules, the words "public limited company" may be replaced by p.l.c., plc, P.L.C. or PLC.

Re-registration under the Companies Act does not constitute a new legal entity but merely subjects the company to certain additional company law rules.

Signed *Andrew George*

Dated 7 May 2004



Patents Form 1/77

Patents Act 1977
(Rule 16)07APR03 E798357-1 D02835
P01/7700 0.00-0307987.8

Request for grant of a patent

(See the notes on the back of this form. You can also get an explanatory leaflet from the Patent Office to help you fill in this form.)

The Patent Office
Cardiff Road
Newport
South Wales
NP10 8QQ

1. Your reference

SMR/P550660

2. Patent application number
(The Patent Office will fill in this part)

0307987.8

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)

ATL Engineering (UK) Limited
Unit 15 Peartree Business Centre
Peartree Road
Stanway
Colchester
Essex CO3 5JN

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

UK

80005230C3

4. Title of the invention

AN INFINITELY VARIABLE CONTINUOUS RECLINER
FOR VEHICLE SEATS AND SIMILAR APPLICATIONS

5. Name of your agent (if you have one)

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode)

URQUHART-DYKES & LORD
Midsummer House
413 Midsummer Boulevard
CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES
MK9 3BN

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

1644008 ✓

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (if you know it) the or each application number

Country

Priority application number
(if you know it)Date of filing
(day / month / year)

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application

Date of filing
(day / month / year)8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (Answer 'Yes' if:
a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
b) there is an Inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
c) any named applicant is a corporate body.
See note (d))

YES

Patents Form 1/77

9. Enter the number of sheets for any of the following items you are filing with this form.
Do not count copies of the same document

Continuation sheets of this form

Description

6

Claim(s)

Abstract

Drawing(s)

8

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77)

Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77)

Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77)

Any other documents
(please specify)

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Date 7.4.03

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

Mr Simon Raynor - 01908 666645

Warning

After an application for a patent has been filed, the Comptroller of the Patent Office will consider whether publication or communication of the invention should be prohibited or restricted under Section 22 of the Patents Act 1977. You will be informed if it is necessary to prohibit or restrict your invention in this way. Furthermore, if you live in the United Kingdom, Section 23 of the Patents Act 1977 stops you from applying for a patent abroad without first getting written permission from the Patent Office unless an application has been filed at least 6 weeks beforehand in the United Kingdom for a patent for the same invention and either no direction prohibiting publication or communication has been given, or any such direction has been revoked.

Notes

- a) If you need help to fill in this form or you have any questions, please contact the Patent Office on 08459 500505.
- b) Write your answers in capital letters using black ink or you may type them.
- c) If there is not enough space for all the relevant details on any part of this form, please continue on a separate sheet of paper and write "see continuation sheet" in the relevant part(s). Any continuation sheet should be attached to this form.
- d) If you have answered 'Yes' Patents Form 7/77 will need to be filed.
- e) Once you have filled in the form you must remember to sign and date it.
- f) For details of the fee and ways to pay please contact the Patent Office.

AN INFINITELY VARIABLE CONTINUOUS RECLINER FOR VEHICLE SEATS AND SIMILAR APPLICATIONS

The present invention relates to a continuously variable recliner for vehicle seats and
5 similar applications.

Typically in vehicle seats the two main components are the seat cushion, which is the part one sits on, and the seat squab (seat back), which is the part one leans against. It is normal that the angle between the cushion and the squab is to be adjustable so that
10 the seated occupant can obtain maximum comfort. This is because the body shapes and size of occupants can vary greatly. It is also desirable to have a facility of recline so that the occupant can rest in a more horizontal position.

To achieve this feature it is normal to position a mechanism such that, one side is
15 attached to the seat cushion and the other to the seat squab, see Fig 1. Sometimes a single mechanism is used on one side of the seat with a simple pivot on the other side for low load/strength applications. Conversely for high strength seats, mechanisms are fitted on both sides.

20 There are a number of mechanisms used throughout the world but in general terms the range of mechanisms used can be divided into two different types.

Type 1 of the mechanism range is what is called the ratchet type recliner and is operated by the raising and lowering of a lever. These work by raising the operating
25 lever, resetting the squab angle and then lowering the lever thus relocking the mechanism. What this does is to engage a new position on a set of teeth internally within the mechanism. The two disadvantages of the Ratchet type are:-

a) The angle of recline has increments of movement normally of about 5
30 degrees due to the form of the teeth. This means for example the seat cannot be set 2 degrees forwards or backwards from a locked position.

- b) When the lever is raised to unlock the mechanism, the internal teeth are disengaged and the recliner should not therefore be operated while the vehicle is in motion.
- 5 Type 2 of the mechanism range is the type with a continual mesh with an infinitely variable adjustment range. Normally these mechanisms are operated by manual hand wheels although on more expensive seats, electric motors are often employed. Basically by turning a hand wheel or operating an electric switch the squab is powered backwards or forwards. When the seat is moving forwards or backwards it
10 is continuously in mesh and can be stopped in any position within an infinitely (i.e. continuously) variable range of adjustment.

It can now be readily appreciated that Type 2 overcomes the disadvantages already outlined for Type 1.

- 15 These Type 2 mechanisms also come in a range of different designs. There are designs incorporating a worm and wheel system, others incorporate a planetary gear system where the planetary gears are meshed with internally stamped gear rings. However, the simplest and most successful of all of the infinitely variable type of
20 mechanisms is the well tried and tested 'Taunel' system as manufactured by Keiper Recaro of Germany.

- The main principle of the Keiper Recaro mechanism concerns a pair of inner/outer fine blanked tooth rings, which give it its rotation using a waltzing movement.
25 Another feature of the Keiper Recaro Taunel mechanism relates to a wedge device, which is necessary in order to reduce play (chuck) and creep (the slow lowering of the squab under its own weight).

- 30 The present invention relates to an improved recliner mechanism. The improved mechanism makes the wedge part of the Keiper Recaro redundant by means of a new design concept for the tooth form.

The basic concept of both the new recliner mechanism and the Keiper Recaro recliner is very simple, and consists of basically two plates produced by the 'Fine Blanking Technique'. One plate is attached to the seat cushion and has an external tooth form pressed in it by fine blanking. The other plate is attached to the seat squab and in this plate an internal tooth form is pressed into it by fine blanking. The plate with the internal tooth form contains one more tooth than the plate with the external tooth form. A centrally placed eccentric cam drives the mechanism in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction.

10 An embodiment of the present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic side view of a vehicle seat having a recliner mechanism;

15 Figure 2 is a side view of a recliner mechanism;

Figure 3 is a first isometric view of the recliner mechanism;

Figure 4 is a second isometric view of the recliner mechanism;

20 Figure 5a is a front view and figure 5b is a side view of a cam;

Figures 6a and 6b are exploded and unexploded isometric views of the recliner mechanism;

25 Figure 7 is a side view of the recliner mechanism in a partially reclined position, and

Figure 8 is an isometric view of the recliner mechanism in a partially reclined position.

30 The vehicle seat shown schematically in Figure 1 includes a seat cushion, which is the part one sits on, a seat squab (seat back), and a recliner mechanism that connects

the squab to the cushion and allows the angle of the squab to be adjusted relative to the cushion.

The recliner mechanism comprises a cushion plate (1), a squab plate (2), a cushion clamp plate (3), a squab clamp plate/pivot support (4), a special eccentric cam (5) and finally four through plate tubular rivets (6), see FIG 2.

The cushion plate (1) is a fine blanked component with an external toothed ring (7) semi-sheared out of the base material. In the centre of the toothed ring is a hole (8), see FIG 3. Two holes at the bottom of the plate (9) are for the tubular rivets (6). The toothed ring (7) as shown here has 29 teeth equally spaced and with a very special profile which gives a touch contact point with the teeth on the squab plate (2).

The squab plate (2) is a fine blanked component with an internal toothed ring (10) semi-sheared out of the base material. In the centre of the toothed ring is a hole (11) that provides one side of a trunnion bearing for the eccentric cam (5). Two holes (12) at the top of the plate (2) are for the tubular rivets (6). The toothed ring (10) as shown has 30 teeth equally spaced, also with a very special profile that gives a touch contact point with the teeth on the cushion plate (1).

As can be seen most clearly in Fig. 2, the profiles of the internal toothed ring (10) and the external toothed ring (7) are designed so that the teeth of the two rings make contact with one another around substantially the entire circumference of the rings. Owing to the fact that the external ring has one less tooth than the internal ring, the degree of engagement varies from one tooth to the next, such that the teeth are fully engaged on one side of the mechanism (at point A) and fully disengaged on the opposite side (at point B). This arrangement removes practically all free play (chuck) from the mechanism, within manufacturing tolerances.

The cushion clamp plate (3) is a simple toggled component. It has two holes (13) at the bottom through which pass the tubular rivets (6) which effectively clamp it onto the cushion plate (1). Through the tubular rivets pass the main fixing bolts (not shown) that attach the mechanism to the cushion frame. The clamp plate (3) includes

an offset arcuate flange (14) that overhangs the squab plate (2) to stop the mechanism separating in use, whilst still allowing the squab plate to revolve.

The squab clamp plate/pivot support (4) is also a simple toggled component. It has
5 two holes (15) through which pass the tubular rivets (6) that effectively clamp it onto

the squab plate (2). The clamp plate (4) includes an offset arm (16) that overhangs
the cushion plate (1) to stop the mechanism separating in use, whilst still allowing
the cushion plate (1) to revolve.

10 At the lower end of the squab clamp plate (4) is a hole (17) through which passes the
bearing of a cam (5). It is now apparent that the cam is supported on one side by
hole (17) and on the other by hole (11) in squab plate (2).

15 Through the tubular rivets (6) pass the main fixing bolts (not shown) that attach the
mechanism to both the cushion and squab seat frames.

The special eccentric cam (5) is unique being different from any of the cams used in
other mechanisms, due to the fact that the special tooth forms developed for this
mechanism automatically hold the engaged teeth (at point A) fully enmeshed because
20 on the opposite side (at point B) peak to peak contact is held. Even the teeth that are
not peak to peak urge the engagement of the external tooth form into the internal
tooth form. This is different to current mechanisms where opposite to the enmeshed
teeth there is no contact between the inner ring and the outer ring and where
consequently the parts must be held in mesh by pressure of the central cam. FIG 2
25 shows clearly the constant contact between the teeth, which is a very important
feature of the present invention.

FIG 5 shows the unique cam (5), which includes a cam profile (18) with a bearing
(19) on each side. One can see that the cam profile is cut away on the left side and
30 the right side. The curved surface at the top and bottom is designed to engage the
hole (8) in cushion plate (1). Through the complete cam is a square hole (20). This
hole is to accept a square shaft on which is mounted either a hand wheel or electric
motor with a reduction gearbox (not shown).

Looking at FIG 5 one can see a centreline of rotation and a centreline of cam. One can be forgiven for thinking that the centreline of rotation is the same as the rotation centreline of the hand wheel, it is not. The fixed stationary point on the seat is 5 centreline of cam, and the centreline of rotation moves around the centreline of cam in a circular motion the radius of movement being the distance from centreline of cam to centraline of rotation. This distance is a very crucial dimension when defining the tooth profiles of the relative gear rings.

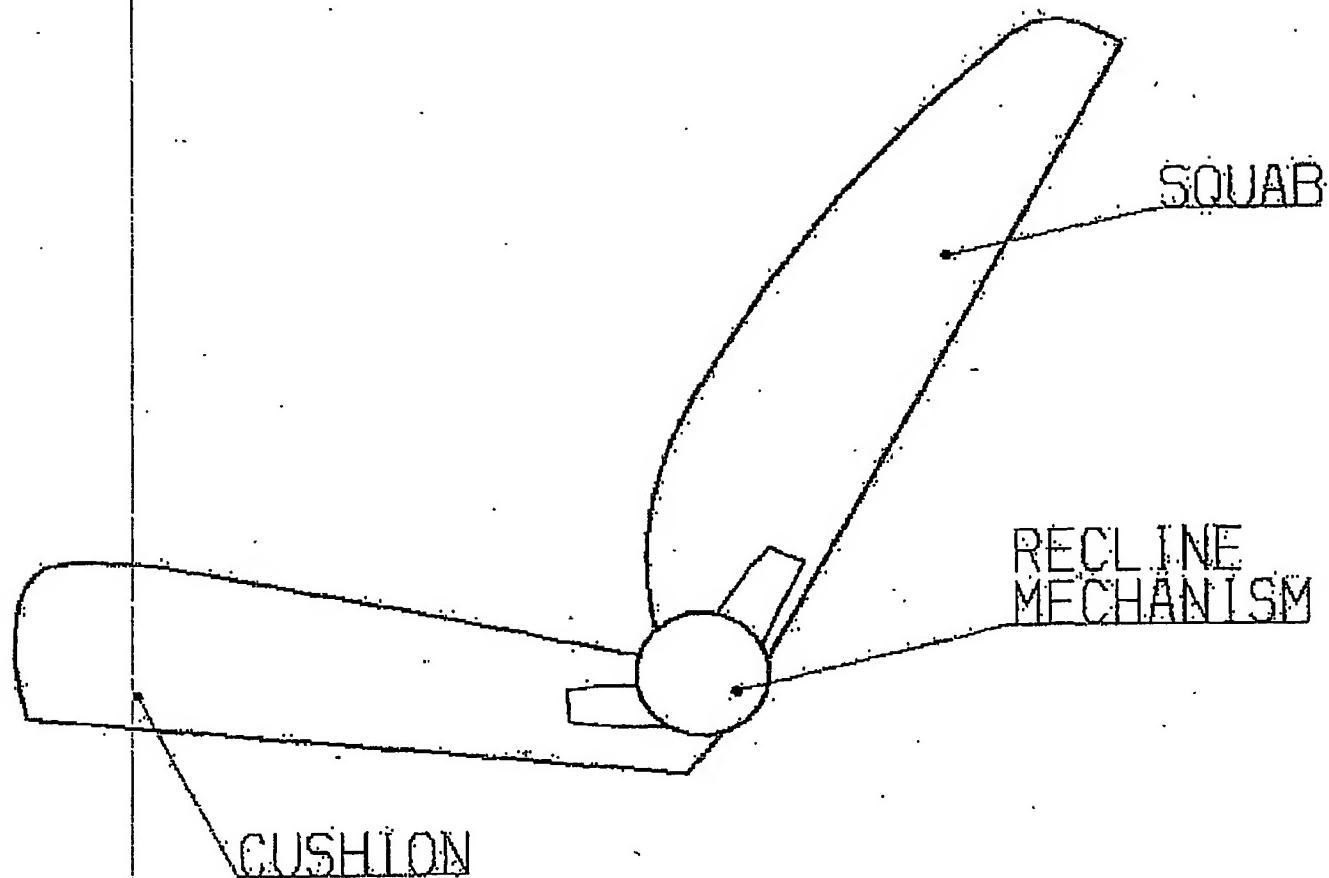
10 As the squab moves backwards or forwards the centre of the mechanism is moving round and round. This gives a 'waltzing' movement to the squab, it is however very small and would not normally be noticeable.

15 Operation of the recliner mechanism will be explained with reference to figures 2 and 7, where Figure 2 shows the mechanism in a fully upright position and figure 7 shows it in a partially reclined position, with the squab plate (2) rotated through an angle of about 40°. It will be appreciated that in each case the position of maximum engagement (point A) is determined by the rotational position of the cam (5) and rotates with the cam. Since the internal tooth ring (10) has one more tooth than the 20 external tooth ring (7), the cushion plate (1) advances by one tooth anti-clockwise for each clockwise revolution of the cam (5). In the example shown in the drawings, the internal tooth ring (10) has 30 teeth, with an angular separation between adjacent teeth of 12°. The cam (5) has therefore rotated through approximately 3.3 revolutions clockwise to produce the 40° anticlockwise rotation of the cushion plate (1).

25 Various modifications of the mechanism described above are of course possible. For example, the gear rings and other components of the mechanism may be made using alternative manufacturing methods, such as blanking, broaching, eroding and so on.
30 Various of the components, for example the cam (5), may also have alternative forms or shapes, according to their specific requirements.

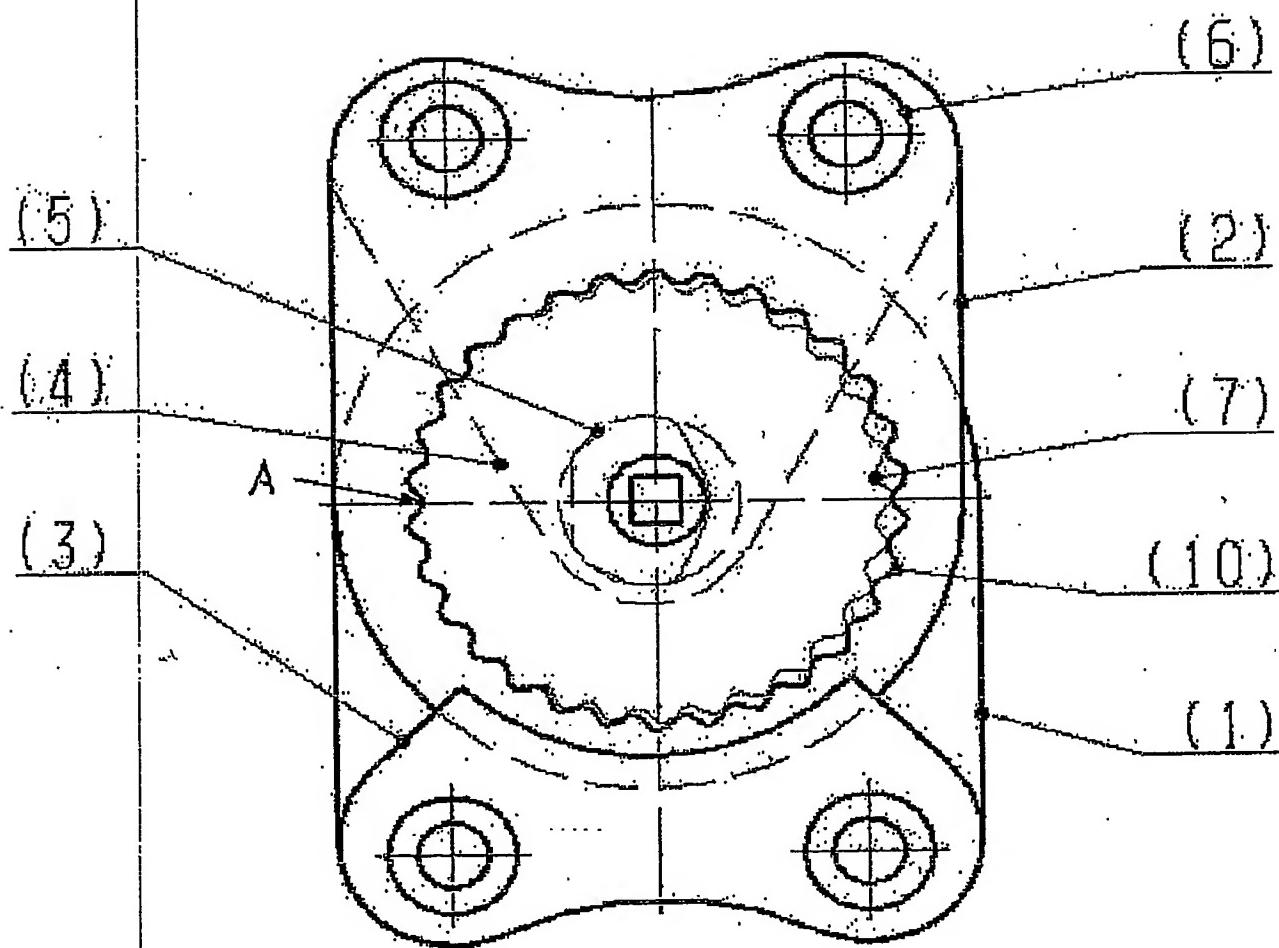
1/8

FIG 1



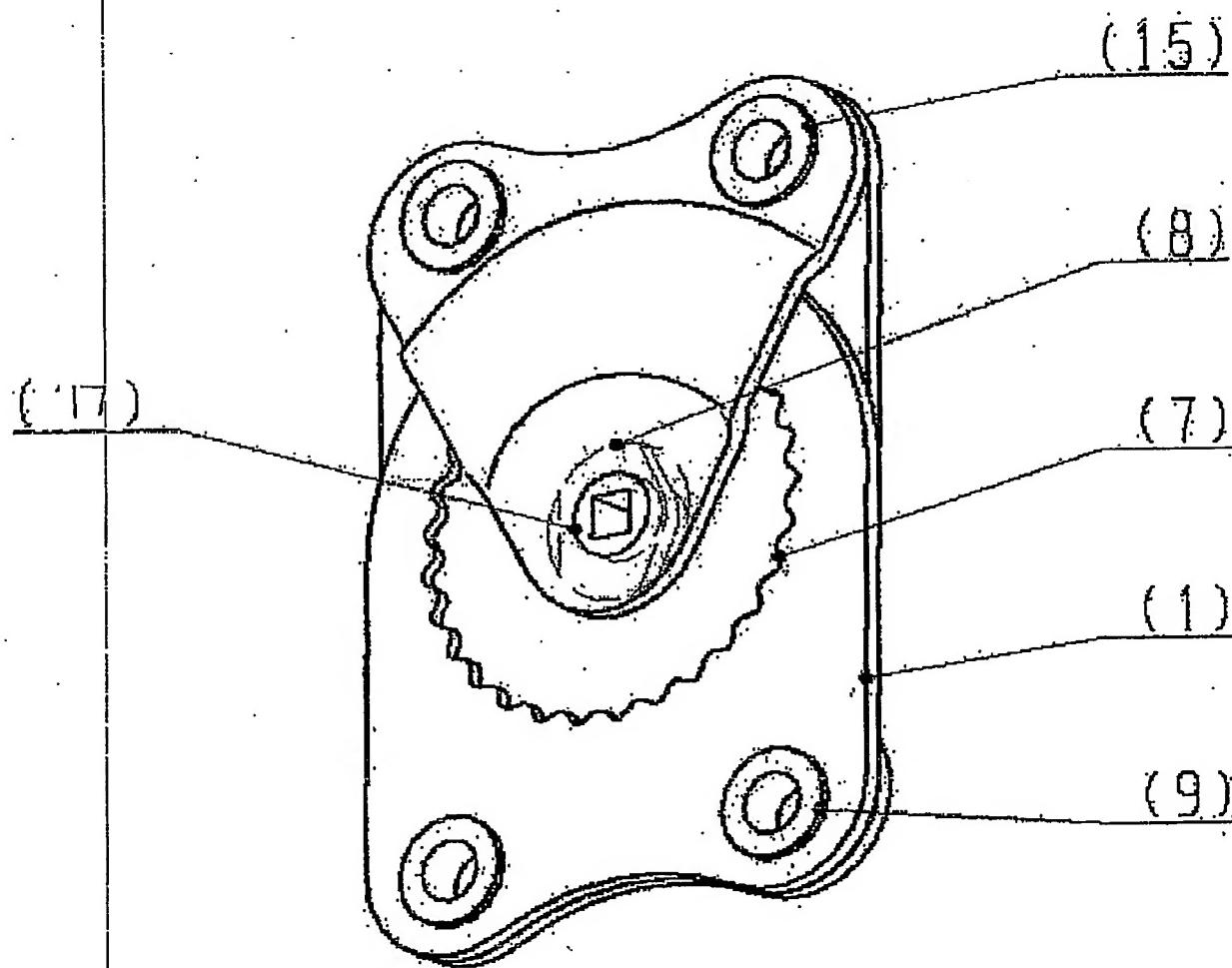
2/8

FIG 2



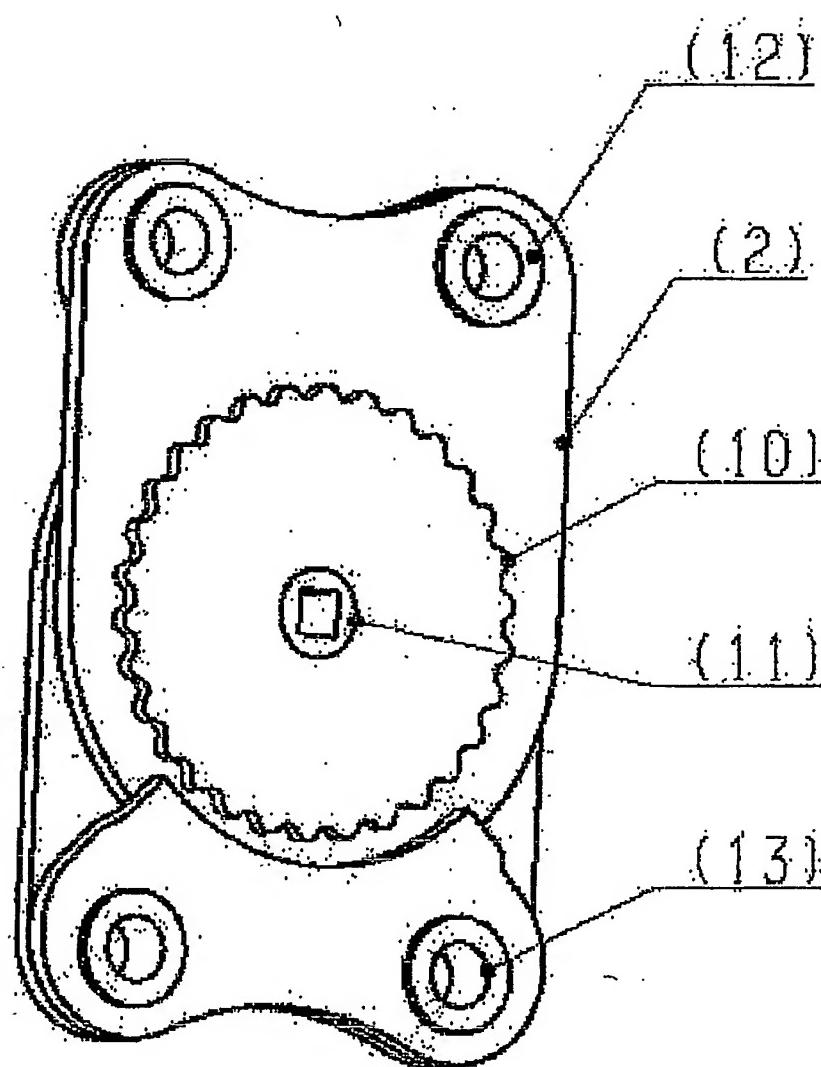
3/8

FIG 3



4/8

FIG 4



5/8

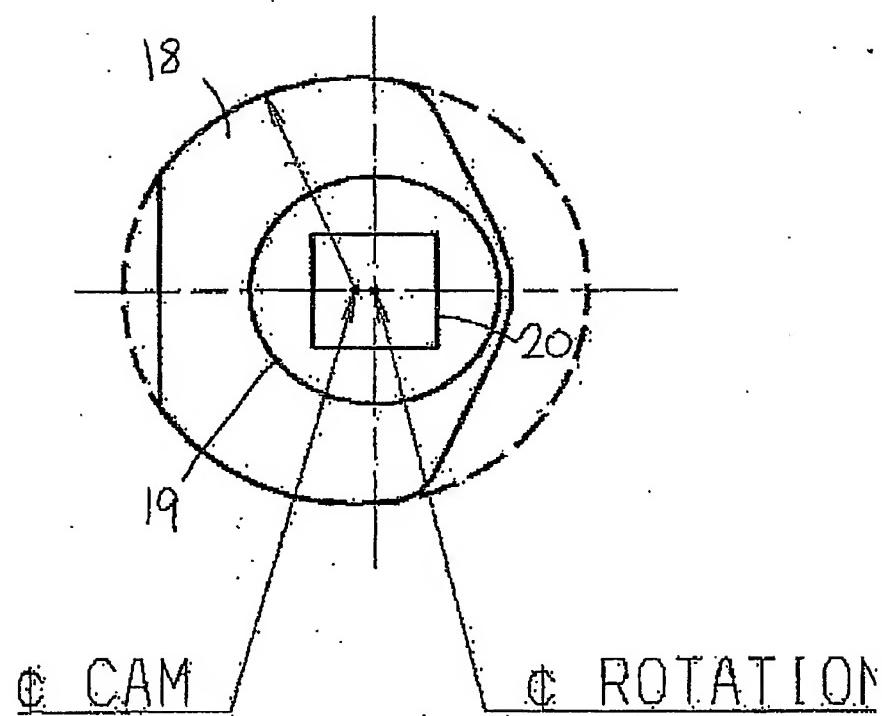
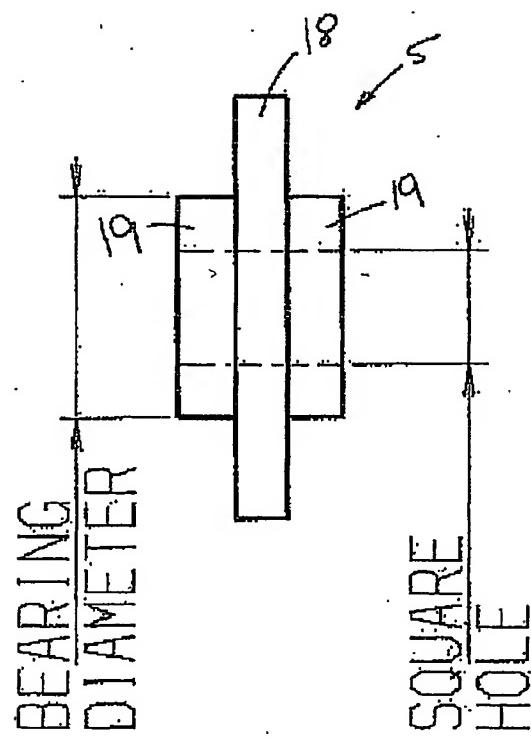
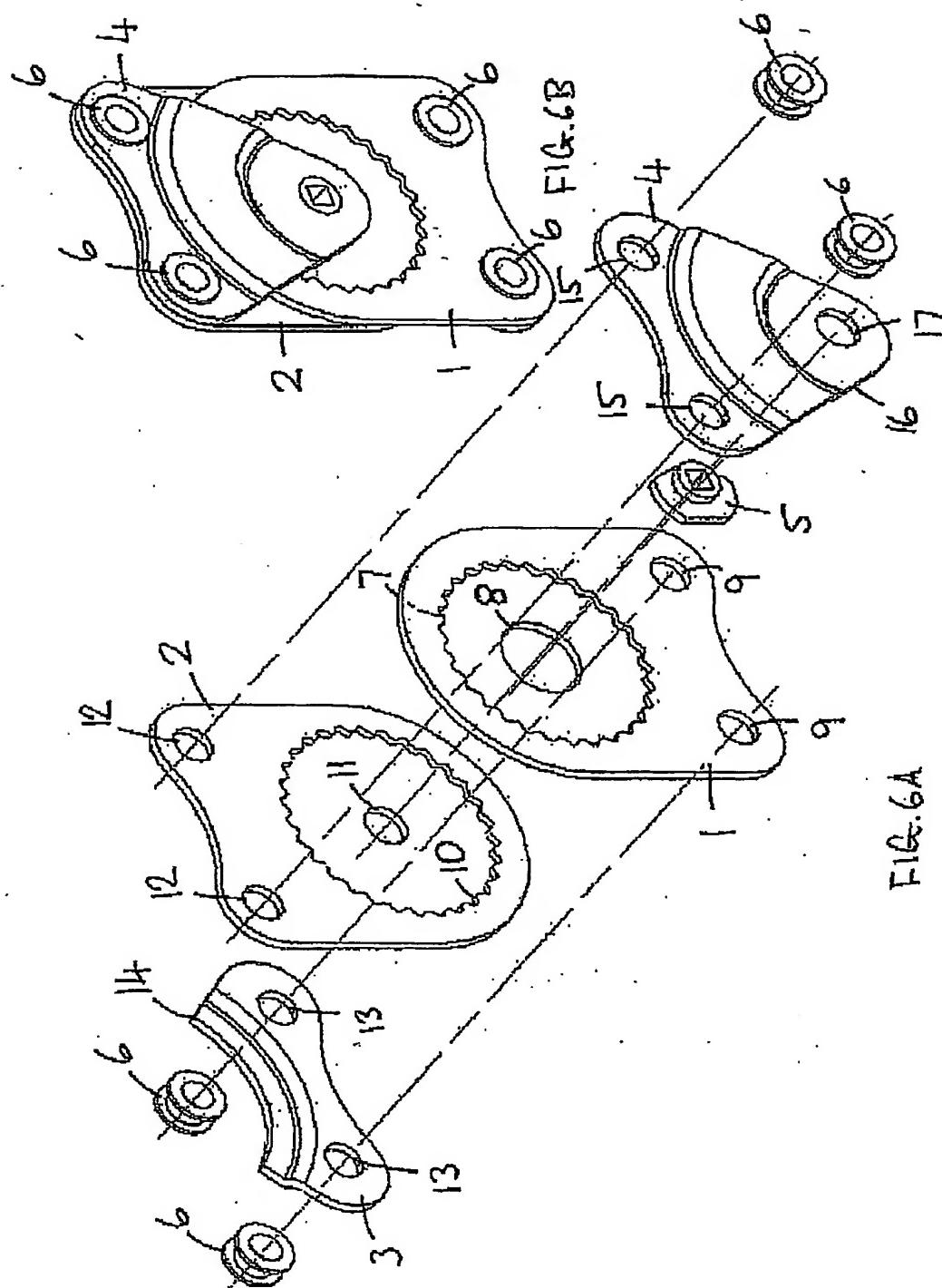


FIG. 5A

FIG. 5B

6/8



7/8

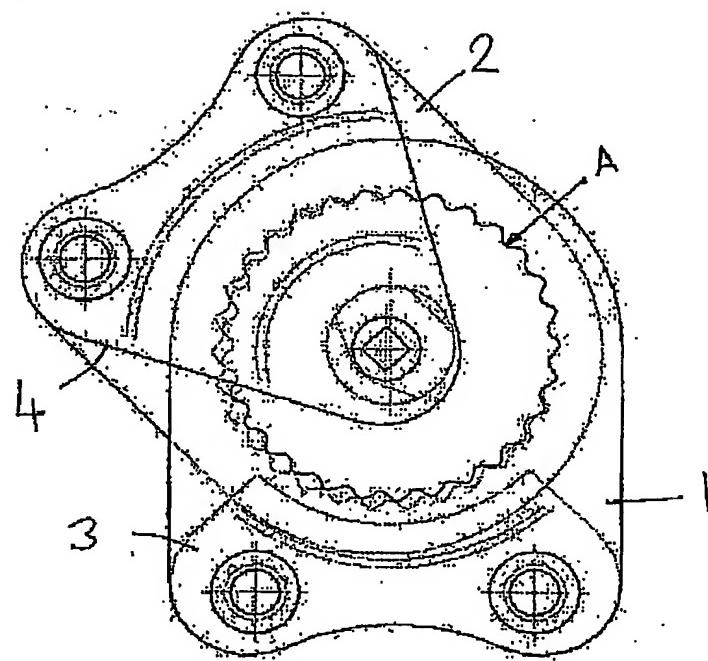


Fig. 7

8/8

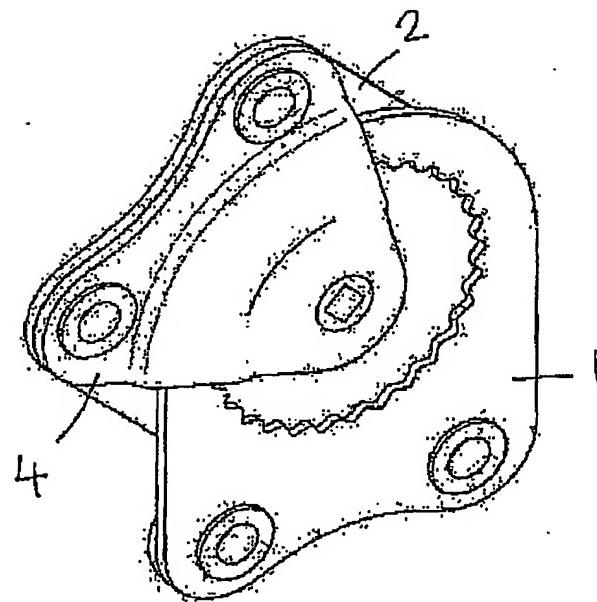


Fig. 8